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Conceptualizing the "Wantedness" of Women's Consensual and Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences: Implications for How Women Label Their Experiences With Rape

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Sex is often conceptualized either as wanted and consensual or as unwanted and nonconsensual, reflecting an implicit model of wanting that is unidimensional and dichotomous and that conflates wanting and consenting. This study has three objectives: developing a multidimensional model for conceptualizing the wantedness of a sexual act, using this model to compare women's experiences with rape and consensual sex, and assessing whether wantedness is related to rape acknowledgment. Participants were college women who described their experiences with rape (n = 77) or consensual sexual intercourse (n = 87). Results supported a multidimensional model of sexual wanting and a wanting–consenting distinction. Compared with acknowledged rape victims, unacknowledged rape victims reported wanting the sexual intercourse more despite not having consented.

Many people, including the public and researchers, treat sex as either wanted or unwanted, with wanted sex being consensual and unwanted sex being nonconsensual. Real life, however, is often more complicated. For example, one woman, recalling her thoughts immediately before experiencing nonconsensual sex, wrote,

> I was thinking, "I really shouldn't be doing this," but on the other hand, almost like the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other, I was saying, "he is so cute and I really like him and he will probably think I was just leading him on if I don't do it." (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2000)

She expressed reasons for wanting to have sex and reasons for not wanting to have sex. Furthermore, although she expressed reasons for wanting to have sex, her questionnaire responses made it clear that she had not consented.

Can sex be wanted *and* unwanted? Can sex be *wanted but nonconsensual*? These questions have important scientific, clinical, legal, and interpersonal implications.

In this article, we describe what we view as the prevailing dominant model used to conceptualize sexual wanting, and we discuss problems with this model. We then present a new model of sexual wanting and use it to explore women's feelings about consensual sex and rape.

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The Dominant Model of Sexual Wanting

In the dominant model of sexual wanting, sex is conceptualized as either wanted or unwanted, reflecting a unidimensional, dichotomous model. Wanted sex is treated as consensual, and unwanted sex is treated as nonconsensual, reflecting a model that conflates wanting and consenting (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005). Researchers do not explicitly delineate this model, and, if asked, they might view it as problematic. Nevertheless, much research seems consistent with this model. Below, we illustrate these points with examples from research, including our own.

Examples Reflecting a Unidimensional, Dichotomous Conceptualization of Wantedness

The dominant model, which is often apparent in research on sexuality, is unidimensional and dichotomous. The dominant model is implicit when sex is conceptualized unproblematically as either wanted or unwanted, when questionnaires refer to "wanted" sex or "unwanted" sex and ask respondents to recall incidents that fit one or the other and when questionnaires do not allow participants to express their ambivalence.

For example, in a study investigating token resistance to sex, Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh (1988) asked women if they had been in the following situation: "You were with *a guy who wanted to engage in sexual intercourse and you wanted to also*, but for some reason you indicated that *you didn't want to*. . . " (p. 874, emphasis added). By referring to "wanted" sex and not allowing for ambivalence, this question conformed to the dominant model in which sex is assumed to be wanted or unwanted but not both. Similar questions have been used in other

studies (e.g., Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1994; Shotland & Hunter, 1995; Sprecher, Hatfield, Cortese, Potapova, & Levitskaya, 1994).

Research on sexual assertiveness also reflects the wanted–unwanted dichotomy. For example, Morokoff et al.'s (1997) Sexual Assertiveness Scale was designed to measure several aspects of women's sexual assertiveness, including "initiation of *wanted sexual experience*" and "refusal of *unwanted sexual experience*" (p. 791, emphasis added). The measure includes items such as, "I begin sex with my partner *if I want to*" and "I refuse to let my partner touch my breasts *if I don't want that*, even if my partner insists" (p. 804, emphasis added). These items and the underlying concepts seem to be based on an implicit unidimensional, dichotomous model of wanting.

Examples Reflecting the Conflation of Wanting and Consenting

The dominant model also equates wanting sex with consenting to sex. This model is reflected when respondents are asked about "unwanted" sex, but their responses are treated as incidents of nonconsensual sex, thus making unwanted consensual sex conceptually impossible. This model is also reflected when, to qualify as having experienced nonconsensual sex, respondents must report sex that was not only nonconsensual but also unwanted, thus making wanted nonconsensual sex conceptually impossible (see Figure 1a).

For example, Muehlenhard and Linton (1987, p. 188) defined rape as sexual intercourse when the woman "did not want to" and made that clear to her partner, but he did it anyway. In a nationwide survey of college students, Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) defined rape as sexual intercourse or other sexual penetration "*when you didn't want to* because a man gave you alcohol or drugs" or "*when you didn't want to* because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force" (p. 167, emphasis added). Similar definitions have been used in other studies (e.g., Kahn, Mathie, & Torgler, 1994; Shapiro & Schwarz, 1997; Testa & Dermen, 1999). These definitions imply that sex must be unambiguously unwanted to qualify as rape. Consistent with the dominant model, sex is treated as unwanted or wanted, and wantedness and consent are treated as equivalent.

a. The Dominant Model:
"Sex is either wanted and consensual or unwanted and nonconsensual"

	Wanted	Unwanted
Consensual	Not rape	NOT POSSIBLE
Nonconsensual	NOT POSSIBLE	Rape

b. The Dominant Model:
"Rape is unwanted nonconsensual sex."

	Wanted	Unwanted
Consensual	Not rape	Not rape
Nonconsensual	Not rape	Rape

c. The New Model:
"Wanting and consenting are distinct concepts; nonconsensual sex is rape."

	Wanted	Unwanted
Consensual	Not rape	Not rape
Nonconsensual	Rape	Rape

Figure 1. The dominant and new models of wanting and consenting and their implications for what counts as rape. Under the dominant model, wanted nonconsensual sex is either impossible (a) or possible but not rape (b). A new model of wanting that does not conflate wanting and consenting would allow for a broader definition of rape (c).

Problems With the Dominant Model

Problems With the Wanted–Unwanted Dichotomy

Although the dominant model treats sex as either wanted or unwanted, many people report ambivalence about sex. In O'Sullivan and Gaines's (1998) study of sexual decision making in college students, for example, over 80% of the participants reported a situation in which they felt ambivalent about engaging in a sexual activity. Muehlenhard and Rodgers (1998) collected narrative data that captured participants' ambivalence. One woman wrote, "although my body wanted him my mind knew better" (p. 449). Another wrote, "I wanted to sleep with him, but I didn't know how he viewed the relationship" (p. 450). Similarly, Tolman and Szalacha (1999) found that many adolescent girls reported simultaneously experiencing reasons for wanting sex (e.g., feelings of pleasure) and for not wanting it (e.g., feelings of vulnerability).

Problems With Conflating Wanting and Consenting

Although the dominant model equates wanting and consenting, we argue that it is useful to conceptualize wanting and consenting as distinct concepts. In our conceptualization, to *want* something is to desire it, to wish for it, to feel inclined toward it, or to regard it or aspects of it as positively valenced; in contrast, to *consent* is to be willing or to agree to do something. Wanting may influence individuals' decisions about whether to consent, but wanting and consenting need not correspond. Individuals can agree or be willing to do things that do not correspond with their wishes or their inclinations (e.g., someone may not want to go to work on Monday morning yet still may be willing to go). Conversely, individuals can want or wish for something but decide not to consent to it (e.g., someone may want to go out drinking with friends but decide

to stay home and study). As illustrated below, individuals sometimes distinguish between wanting to have sex and consenting to have sex.

Evidence that Consensual Sex Can Be Unwanted

Many people report having consented to unwanted sex (O'Sullivan and Allgeier, 1998; Reneau & Muehlenhard, 2005; Shotland and Hunter, 1995; Sprecher et al., 1994). For example, O'Sullivan and Allgeier (1998) found that 50% of women and 26% of men in committed dating relationships reported consenting to unwanted sex during a 2-week period. The most commonly cited reasons were satisfying a partner's needs, promoting intimacy, and avoiding relationship tension. Other studies have identified reasons such as avoiding hurting a partner's feelings, feeling obligated because of something a partner did for them, and enhancing their sexual experience or image (Reneau & Muehlenhard, 2005).

Evidence that Nonconsensual Sex Can Be Wanted

In the dominant model, sex that is both nonconsensual and wanted is conceptually impossible. However, when wanting and consenting are conceptualized as distinct, wanted nonconsensual sex is possible. For example, an individual might want to engage in a sexual activity, meaning that the individual desires or wishes for the activity or regards aspects of the activity as positively valenced but might nevertheless decide not to and thus be unwilling to engage in the activity. Little research has systematically tested the idea that nonconsensual sex can be wanted. However, when Satterfield and Muehlenhard (1996) asked college women and men about an experience with nonconsensual, unwanted sex, many of them described nonconsensual sex that was both wanted and unwanted. Their reasons for wanting the sexual experience included feeling sexually aroused, wanting to enhance the relationship, and wanting to enhance their image.

Unacknowledged Rape as a Possible Consequence of the Wanting-Consenting Conflation

It is possible that equating wantedness and consent contributes to unacknowledged rape. In Koss, Dinero, Seibel, and Cox's (1988) nationwide study of rape, 73% of the rape victims were *unacknowledged rape victims*—that is, they reported an experience meeting the researchers' operational definition of rape but did not label their experience as "rape." In subsequent studies, 73% (Layman, Gidycz, & Lynn, 1996), 64% (Bondurant, 2001), 62% (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004), 58% (Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, & Halvorsen, 2003), 48% (Kahn et al., 1994), and 47% (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003) of rape victims were unacknowledged rape victims.

Why might women refrain from labeling their experiences as rape? One explanation involves the conflation of wanting and consenting inherent in the dominant model. In some cases of rape, especially in cases of acquaintance rape, nonconsensual sex may be unwanted in some ways and wanted in others. Rape victims who accept the narrow definition of rape promoted by the dominant model and who had reasons for wanting to have sex may believe that their experience does not qualify as rape. They may believe that wanted but nonconsensual sex is either impossible (see Figure 1a) or possible but not rape (Figure 1b). A model of wanting that distinguishes between wanting and consenting would allow for a broader definition of rape (Figure 1c) and, therefore, would allow victims of nonconsensual sex to label their experience as rape regardless of whether the experience was wanted, unwanted, or both.

The Current Study

The current study addressed three primary objectives. Objective 1 was the further development of a new model of sexual wanting. Elaborating on a model suggested in other studies (Muehlenhard, Peterson, MacPherson, & Blair, 2002; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998, pp. 459–460), we used a model that included the following components: (a) multiple gradations of wanting rather than a dichotomy; (b) multiple dimensions, acknowledging that sex can be wanted in some ways and unwanted in other ways; (c) an act–consequences distinction, acknowledging that wanting or not wanting a sexual act differs from wanting or not wanting its consequences; and (d) a wanting–consenting distinction, acknowledging that wanting or not wanting sex differs from consenting or not consenting to sex.

Objective 2 involved applying this new model to women's experiences with consensual and nonconsensual sex. Women who had experienced consensual sexual intercourse and women who had experienced rape completed a questionnaire developed to measure components of the new model. We explored between- and within-group differences in global wantedness ratings and in reasons for wanting and not wanting the intercourse.

Objective 3 involved the use of the new model to understand how women who had been raped labeled their experiences. We used the new model to assess whether ambivalence regarding wanting was related to rape victims' status as acknowledged or unacknowledged rape victims.

Conducting this study required that we choose a definition of rape. We chose to use a relatively narrow definition of rape, including only penile–vaginal intercourse (although some legal definitions include *digital penetration*, *oral sex*, etc.) and including only sex that was clearly nonconsensual because of force or fear of force or because the victims was too intoxicated to consent or to resist (see Estrich, 1987; Muehlenhard, Powch, Phelps, & Giusti, 1992; Posner & Silbaugh, 1996). We chose a narrow definition for two rea-

sons: (1) If our definition had been broader than legal definitions, we might have inappropriately labeled some participants as *unacknowledged rape victims* in cases in which their experience fit our definition but did not fit the legal definition in their state. In exploring why some women did not label their nonconsensual sexual experience as *rape*, we wanted to avoid making psychological interpretations when the actual explanation was that they knew the law. (2) We hoped that by including only clear cases of rape, any results showing that some rape victims reported reasons for wanting to have sex would be more compelling. Our decision about whether to include a participant in the rape group did not mean that her experience was or was not rape in any absolute sense.

Method

Participants

The measures for our study were completed by 339 undergraduate women taking introductory psychology at the University of Kansas. Participants received credit toward a course requirement in return for their participation. Their mean age was 19, and most ($n = 239$; 70.5%) were in their 1st year of college. The ethnic composition of the sample was as follows: European American ($n = 276$; 81.4%), Hispanic American ($n = 21$; 6.2%), Asian American ($n = 13$; 3.8%), African American ($n = 10$; 2.9%), biracial or multiracial ($n = 7$; 2.1%), international student ($n = 3$; 0.9%), and other ($n = 3$; 0.9%). Almost all ($n = 323$; 95.3%) identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual, 11 (3.2%) identified their sexual orientation as bisexual, 1 (0.3%) identified as lesbian, 1 (0.3%) described herself as "undecided," and 1 (0.3%) chose "other." From this group, we identified a sample of women who had been raped (the "rape group") and a sample of women who had experienced consensual sexual intercourse (the "consensual sex group").

Identifying Members of the Rape Group

Because of the difficulty of obtaining an adequate sample size for the rape group, we used a 4-step procedure to identify group members. Step 1 involved the use of mass testing to identify individuals likely to meet the criteria for this group. In mass testing, large numbers of introductory psychology students completed a set of brief screening measures to determine their eligibility for numerous studies. On the screening measure for this study, the women were asked if they had experienced either of two situations. Question 1 asked about a situation in which (a) "you were 14 or older," (b) "you had penile–vaginal intercourse when you did not consent or agree to," and (c) "this experience occurred because you were incapable of giving consent or resisting due to intoxication." Question 2 asked about a situation in which (a) "you were 14 or older," (b) "you had penile–vaginal intercourse when you did not consent or agree to," and (c) "this experience occurred because the other person used physical force or somehow made you afraid to say no." The screening measure did not use the word *rape*; however, anyone having been in one of these situations had been raped as defined by our research definition and by the laws of this state (*Kansas State Annals*, 1995, 21-3501) and probably of all states. Of the 1,862 women who completed the screening measure, 1,138 (61.0%) reported having had penile–vaginal intercourse either willingly or unwillingly, and 128 (6.9%) reported having experienced nonconsensual sex (i.e., they answered *yes* to Question 1 or 2).

In Step 2, all 128 women who had reported nonconsensual sex were contacted and invited to participate in the study. In addition, because we wanted to protect the women's privacy, and because of the possibility that some women who had been raped did not construe it as nonconsensual, we also invited an equal number of women who had answered *no* to Questions 1 and 2 (i.e., who indicated that they had not experienced nonconsensual sex obtained through intoxication, force, or fear). Invitations mentioned eligibility based on mass testing but did not mention the specific selection criteria or the topic of the study.

Step 3 involved eliciting respondents' narrative descriptions of their experiences. The Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; see below) included Questions 1 and 2 from the screening questionnaire. Respondents who checked *yes* to Questions 1 or 2 were asked to describe their most recent experience with nonconsensual intercourse. Respondents who checked *no* to Questions 1 and 2 were asked if they had had an experience "similar to" those described in these questions.

In Step 4, for all participants who reported nonconsensual sexual intercourse ($n = 78$) or a similar experience ($n = 66$), the two coinvestigators coded participants' narrative descriptions to determine whether the experiences fit the definition of rape used in this study. Our goal was to identify "false positives" and "false negatives." We relied on participants' narratives rather than relying solely on whether they had checked *yes* or *no* to Questions 1 and 2 because research suggests that respondents sometimes misunderstand questions or interpret questions differently from what the researchers had intended (Dodrill, 2001; Ritschel & Muehlenhard, 2005; Ross & Allgeier, 1996). We coded narratives as meeting our definition of rape if they clearly met the following criteria:

1. The participant was 14 years of age or older at the time of the incident.
2. The incident involved completed penile–vaginal intercourse.
3. The participant had not consented.
4. Either the other person had used physical force or had made the participant afraid to say no for fear of force (the force criterion) or the participant had been unable to consent or resist because of the effect of alcohol or drugs, which would have been reasonably apparent to the other person (the intoxication criterion).

Interrater agreement for the coding was 90% ($r = .82$, $p < .001$). Disagreements were resolved through discussion among the two coinvestigators and a small group of research assistants.

Of the 78 participants who had checked *yes* to the questions about experiencing nonconsensual sexual intercourse obtained through intoxication or force (i.e., who had checked *yes* to Questions 1 or 2), 70 (89.7%) were judged to qualify as rape victims on the basis of the definition used in this study. Of the 66 who had reported a "similar" experience (i.e., who had checked *no* to Questions 1 and 2 but had described a similar experience), 7 (10.6%) were judged to qualify as rape victims. Thus, the rape group consisted of 77 women who answered our measures on the basis of an experience with rape as defined in this study.

Identifying Members of the Consensual Sex Group

Although we could have recruited the consensual sex group by using the mass testing measure (i.e., assigning women who had been raped to the rape group and assigning women who had not been raped to the consensual sex group), we chose not to do so. Such a procedure would have resulted in a consensual sex group that included only women who had never been raped; such a group would not be representative of the general population of college women engaging in consensual sex. To avoid this problem, potential members of the consensual sex group were recruited through the Psychology Department's Web-based sign-up system, which allowed introductory psychology students—the same population from which we drew the rape group—to sign up for a day and time to complete the questionnaires. This Web site specified that only women were eligible to participate but did not mention the topic of the study. Those participants who, on the SEQ (see below), reported engaging in consensual sexual intercourse were included in the consensual sex group. This group included 87 women who answered our measures on the basis of their most recent experience with consensual sexual intercourse.

Measures

The SEQ

The general SEQ was comprised of several different sections.

Narrative descriptions of participants' experiences. The first part of the SEQ differed for the rape and consensual sex groups. Participants who were recruited through mass testing (i.e., potential members of the rape group) were presented again with Questions 1 and 2 from the mass testing questionnaire that asked about nonconsensual sexual intercourse. Those who had had such an experience were asked to describe it. Those who had not had such an experience were asked to describe a similar situation, if applicable. Those who had not experienced nonconsensual intercourse or a similar situation were asked to describe a fictional situation; data from these participants were not used in the analyses.

Participants who were recruited through the Web-based system (i.e., potential members of the consensual sex group) were asked to describe their most recent experience with consensual intercourse, if applicable. Those who had not had consensual intercourse were asked to describe an experience with nonconsensual intercourse or something similar, if applicable. Those who had never had intercourse were asked to describe a fictional situation; data from these participants were not used in the analyses.

All participants were instructed to answer the rest of the questionnaire on the basis of the sexual experience they described. The rest of the questionnaire was identical for both groups.

The labels participants applied to their experiences. On the next section of the SEQ, participants were asked how they labeled the consensual or nonconsensual sexual experience. First they wrote open-ended responses. Then they were given a list of 25 possible labels and asked to check any label applicable to their experience. Possible labels included "rape," as well as options such as "a good sexual experience," "a bad sexual experience," "an exciting sexual experience," "a mistake on my part," and "a mistake on the other person's part." Among participants who reported an experience that fit our definition of rape, those who checked the label "rape" were considered acknowledged rape victims; those who did not check "rape" were considered unacknowledged rape victims.

Questions regarding consent. The SEQ then asked participants about their feelings and expressions of consent during the experience. *Consent* can be conceptualized both as a state of mind (i.e., an internal feeling of willingness) and as a behavior (i.e., a verbal or physical expression of willingness; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Muehlenhard et al., 1992). In order to address both forms of consent, participants were asked to rate on a 7-point scale their agreement with the following statements: "I felt that I consented or agreed to this experience," "I communicated to the other person that I consented or agreed to this experience," and "I communicated to the other person that I did not consent or agree to this experience." Participants also were asked to describe in a narrative format how they communicated their consent or nonconsent.

Wanting Questionnaire

Finally, we assessed participants' reasons, if any, for wanting and not wanting the sexual experience, first via open-ended questions and next via the Wanting Questionnaire, the objective questionnaire based on our new model of wanting (Muehlenhard et al., 2002). The Wanting Questionnaire presented a list of possible reasons for wanting or not wanting the sexual act itself, the consequences of engaging in

the sexual act, and the consequences of not engaging in the sexual act (see Appendixes A and B). Reflecting themes from previous research (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; O'Sullivan & Gaines, 1998; Satterfield & Muehlenhard, 1996), questionnaire items described reasons for wanting or not wanting sex that related to sexual arousal, values, situational characteristics, social status, fear of pregnancy and STDs, and relationship concerns. Respondents indicated whether each item was true for them. If the item was true, they rated the extent to which that item was a reason for wanting or not wanting the sexual activity using a 7-point scale ranging from –3 (*a strong reason for not wanting to have sex*), to 0 (*not a reason for wanting or not wanting to have sex*), to 3 (*a strong reason for wanting to have sex*). Participants also made three global ratings of wantedness. The global wantedness items were as follows: "Overall, how much did you want or not want to engage in the SEXUAL INTERCOURSE ITSELF (not considering the consequences)?," "Overall, how much did you want or not want the POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF ENGAGING in the sexual intercourse?," and "Overall, how much did you want or not want to engage in sexual intercourse in this situation (taking into account the intercourse itself, the possible consequences of engaging in the intercourse, and the possible consequences of not engaging in the intercourse)?" These three items were also rated on a scale ranging from –3 (*strongly unwanted*) to 3 (*strongly wanted*).

Procedure

All participants completed the measures in groups of 25 or fewer under the supervision of female research assistants. They read a consent form assuring confidentiality and explaining their rights. Research assistants also read a statement alerting them to the sensitive nature of the study. To protect participants' privacy, they were seated in alternate seats, they completed the measures anonymously (except for those who volunteered to be interviewed—described in the next section), and they placed their completed questionnaires in manila envelopes so that everyone turned in identical blank manila envelopes. Before leaving, they were debriefed about the purpose of the study and given contact information for the researchers and local counseling and crisis services.

Interviews

Individual follow-up interviews were conducted with a subsample of participants who expressed interest on the interview-request form in their questionnaire packet. Women who described a real sexual experience on the SEQ and who expressed interest in being interviewed were contacted and invited to participate. Interviews were completed with 6 women from the rape group, 1 woman from the consensual sex group, and 1 woman who wrote about an experience that was "similar to" nonconsensual sex but that did not meet our definition of rape. We used their responses to gain further insight into these issues and to illustrate our points.

Results

Objective 1: Development of a Multidimensional Model of Sexual Wanting

The first objective of this study was the further development of a multidimensional model of sexual wanting. Toward this end, we explored the factor structure of the Wanting Questionnaire. Results of the factor analyses provided evidence of the multidimensional nature of wanting and not wanting sex and served as a basis for creating subscales to address the other objectives of this study.

Exploratory Factor Analyses

The exploratory factor analysis included data from 213 participants who had completed the questionnaire according to the directions and who had described a real (rather than a hypothetical) experience with sexual intercourse (i.e., consensual sex, nonconsensual sex, or something "similar" to nonconsensual sex). Two unweighted least squares factor analyses with varimax rotations were conducted: one analyzing participants' reasons for wanting to have sex and one analyzing their reasons for not wanting to have sex. For the factor analysis of reasons for wanting sex, 60 items with a positive mean were included in the factor analysis. On the basis of the scree plot and the interpretability of the factors, 13 factors were retained. For the factor analysis of the reasons for not wanting sex, 43 items with a negative mean rating were included in the factor analysis; 12 factors were retained. The multiple interpretable factors obtained in the factor analyses provide support for the conceptualization of wantedness as a multidimensional construct.

Subscale Development

Sets of items identified in the factor analyses were used to form subscales. On the basis of Cronbach's alphas, minor changes were made to several sets of items. Only subscales with two or more items and with adequate Cronbach's alphas were retained. The subscales, Cronbach's alphas, and sample items are presented in Table 1.

Subscale scores were calculated as follows: Each participant's subscale scores were set equal to the participant's mean ratings of the items on the subscales. When calculating scores on the Reasons for Wanting Sex subscales, any negative and missing ratings were replaced with zeros (indicating that this item was not a reason for wanting to have sex); when calculating scores on the Reasons for Not Wanting Sex subscales, any positive and missing ratings were replaced with zeros (indicating that this item was not a reason for not wanting to have sex).

Table 1. *Reasons-for-Wanting-Sex and Reasons-for-Not-Wanting-Sex Subscales and Sample Items*

Subscales and Sample Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Reasons-for-Wanting-Sex Subscales	
In the Mood (16 items)	.951
I was sexually aroused before the sexual intercourse began.	
I found the other person physically attractive.	
Negative Consequences of Refusing (9 items)	.914
I wanted to avoid hurting the other person's feelings.	
I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person would become angry.	
Personal Gain (4 items)	.716
I thought it might result in my getting something I really wanted (e.g., a gift, a vacation).	
I thought that it would result in the other person doing something I wanted.	
Social Benefits (3 items)	.839
I thought it would improve my reputation among my male friends and acquaintances.	
I thought it would give me something to talk about with friends and acquaintances.	
Fear of Physical Harm (2 items)	.886
I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might harm me physically.	
I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might try to force me to do it.	
Strengthen the Relationship (4 items)	.826
I thought that having sex would strengthen my relationship with the other person in some ways.	
I thought that it would demonstrate my love for the other person.	
Not Intoxicated (2 items)	.956
I was not intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).	
The other person was not intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).	
Not a Virgin (2 items)	.848
I was not a virgin.	
The other person was not a virgin.	
Reasons-for-Not-Wanting-Sex Subscales	
Not in the Mood (7 items)	.865
I was not sexually aroused before the sexual intercourse began.	
The other person's behavior was unappealing or obnoxious in this situation.	
Negative Consequences (8 items)	.881
I felt that engaging in the sexual intercourse would make me feel uncomfortable because it would be going against my morals and values.	
I thought that, if I had sex, I might get a sexually transmitted disease.	
Lack of Confidence (5 items)	.816
I was nervous about my ability to perform sexual intercourse.	
I was a virgin.	
Cheating (2 items)	.951
It would have been "cheating," and I was afraid that it would damage my relationship with my spouse or steady dating partner.	
It would have been "cheating," and I was afraid that it would hurt my spouse or steady dating partner.	
Disliked the Other Person (2 items)	.744
I disliked the other person.	
I found the other person physically unattractive.	
Negative Social Consequences (2 items)	.819
I thought it would harm my reputation among my female friends and acquaintances.	
I thought it would harm my reputation among my male friends and acquaintances.	

Objective 2: Comparisons of the Rape and Consensual Sex Groups

The second objective of this study was to apply the new model to women's experiences with consensual and nonconsensual sex.

Global Ratings of Wantedness

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to explore the relationship between consenting and wanting. The independent variable was membership in the rape or consensual sex group. The dependent variables were the three global ratings of wantedness: the overall wantedness of the sexual intercourse itself (without considering the consequences), the overall wantedness of the consequences of the intercourse, and the overall wantedness of the intercourse (considering both the act and the consequences). Significant differences were found between the rape and the consensual sex groups on the dependent measures, Wilks's $\Lambda = .21$, $F(3, 156) = 199.93$, $p < .001$. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted on each dependent variable as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. Through the use of the Bonferroni method, each alpha was set to .017. The significant results are presented in Table 2. Compared with the rape group, the consensual sex group reported higher levels of

Table 2. *Global Ratings of Wantedness, Reasons for Wanting and Not Wanting Sex, and Consent Ratings as a Function of Membership in the Rape or Consensual-Sex Groups*

	Rape group			Consensual-sex group					
Dependent Variable	***M***	***SD***	**Range**	***M***	***SD***	**Range**	***F***	***p***	**Partial η^2**
Global Ratings of Wantedness[a]									
Sexual intercourse itself	–1.81	1.69	–3 to 3	2.57	0.89	–2 to 3	436.26	<.001	.73
Possible consequences	–2.62	0.89	–3 to 1	–0.77	1.85	–3 to 3	61.95	<.001	.28
Sexual intercourse overall	–2.47	1.16	–3 to 3	1.88	1.39	–3 to 3	453.06	<.001	.74
Reasons-for-Wanting-Sex Subscales[b]									
In the Mood	0.28	0.46	0.0 to 2.0	1.93	0.56	0.6 to 3.0	388.58	<.001	.72
Negative consequences of refusing	0.34	0.61	0.0 to 3.0	0.12	0.36	0.0 to 2.7	7.70	.006	.05
Fear of physical harm	0.35	0.81	0.0 to 3.0	0.00	0.00	0.0 to 0.0	15.49	<.001	.09
Strengthen the relationship	0.21	0.55	0.0 to 3.0	1.06	0.89	0.0 to 3.0	47.37	<.001	.24
Not intoxicated	0.02	0.18	0.0 to 1.5	0.47	0.99	0.0 to 3.0	13.69	<.001	.08
Not a virgin	0.17	0.56	0.0 to 3.0	0.65	1.02	0.0 to 3.0	12.41	.001	.08
Reasons-for-Not-Wanting-Sex Subscales[b]									
Not in the mood	–1.33	0.81	–3.0 to 0.0	–0.03	0.10	–0.4 to 0.0	210.60	<.001	.58
Negative Consequences	–1.60	0.91	–3.0 to 0.0	–0.26	0.47	–2.4 to 0.0	134.39	<.001	.47
Lack of confidence	–0.94	0.96	–3.0 to 0.0	–0.14	0.37	–2.4 to 0.0	49.25	<.001	.25
Disliked other person	–0.38	0.87	–3.0 to 0.0	–0.04	0.33	–3.0 to 0.0	10.91	.001	.07
Negative social consequences	–1.09	1.17	–3.0 to 0.0	–0.15	0.53	–3.0 to 0.0	43.01	<.001	.22
Consent Ratings[c]									
Feeling of consent	2.0	1.4	1 to 7	6.8	0.58	4 to 7	861.00	<.001	.84
Expression of consent	1.9	1.5	1 to 7	6.7	0.86	2 to 7	664.33	<.001	.81
Expression of nonconsent	5.2	2.1	1 to 7	1.1	0.74	1 to 7	271.87	<.001	.63

Note. This table shows results for significant analyses of variance (ANOVAs) only.
[a]Scores can range from –3 (*strongly unwanted*) to 3 (*strongly wanted*). For follow-up ANOVAs, *df* = 1, 158; alpha was set to .017. [b]Reasons-for-Wanting-Sex subscale scores can range from 0 to 3, and Reasons-for-Not-Wanting-Sex subscale scores can range from –3 to 0, on a scale from –3 (*a strong reason for not wanting to have sex*), to 0 (*not a reason for wanting or not wanting to have sex*), to 3 (*a strong reason for wanting to have sex*). For follow-up ANOVAs, *df* = 1, 150; for the Reasons-for-Wanting-Sex subscales, alpha was set to .006; for the Reasons-for-Not-Wanting-Sex subscales, alpha was set to .008. [c]Scores can range from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). For follow-up ANOVAs, *df* = 1, 159; alpha was set to .017.

wantedness for the sexual act, the consequences, and the intercourse overall. On the average, the consensual sex group rated the sexual act itself and the intercourse overall as wanted, whereas the rape group rated both as unwanted. Both groups rated the consequences as unwanted.

Although there were between-group differences, there were also notable within-group variations, as demonstrated by the standard deviations and ranges of responses (see Table 2 and Table 3). Some members of the rape group rated the act itself, the consequences, and the intercourse overall as wanted. Conversely, some members of the consensual sex group rated the act itself, the consequences, and the intercourse overall as unwanted.

Reasons for Wanting and Not Wanting Sexual Intercourse

To compare the groups on reasons for wanting and not wanting sex, MANOVAs were conducted with membership in the rape or consensual sex group as the independent vari-

Table 3. *Percentages of Participants Rating the Sex as "Wanted," "Unwanted," or "No Opinion" as a Function of Their Membership in the Rape or Consensual Sex Group*

	Wanted		No Opinion		Unwanted	
Group	**%**	***n***	**%**	***n***	**%**	***n***
Wantedness of the Act						
Consensual-sex group[a]	96.5	83	0.0	0	**3.5**	**3**
Rape group[b]	**18.9**	**14**	0.0	0	81.1	60
Wantedness of the Consequences						
Consensual-sex group[a]	20.9	18	29.1	25	**50.0**	**43**
Rape group[b]	1.4	1	5.4	4	93.2	69
Overall Wantedness						
Consensual-sex group[a]	81.4	70	12.8	11	**5.8**	**5**
Rape group[b]	5.4	4	2.7	2	91.9	68

Note. Responses that are inconsistent with the dominant model of wanting are in bold.
[a]*n* = 86. [b]*n* = 74.

able and Wanting Questionnaire subscale scores as dependent variables. For the MANOVA with the Reasons for Wanting Sex subscales as the dependent variables, significant differences were found between the rape and consensual sex group, Wilks's Λ = .22, $F(8,143) = 62.19$, $p < .001$. Follow-up ANOVAs were conducted on each dependent variable; alpha was set to .006. Table 2 presents the results for significant follow-up analyses. Compared with the rape group, the consensual sex group rated their experience with intercourse as more wanted because they were in the mood, they hoped to strengthen their relationship with the other person, they and the other person were not intoxicated, and they and the other person were not virgins. Compared with the consensual sex group, the rape group rated the intercourse as more wanted because they expected negative consequences if they refused and because they feared physical harm if they refused (in the Discussion section, we discuss the issue of treating these as reasons for wanting sex).

There were also differences between the rape and consensual sex groups based on the MANOVA with the Reasons for Not Wanting Sex subscales as the dependent variables, Wilks's Λ = .30, $F(6,145) = 55.44$, $p < .001$. Table 2 presents the results for significant follow-up ANOVAs with the Bonferroni correction. Compared with the consensual sex group, the rape group rated sex as more unwanted because they were not in the mood, they expected negative consequences from sex, they lacked confidence in their ability to perform, they disliked the other person, and they feared negative social consequences.

Objective 3: Comparisons of Acknowledged and Unacknowledged Rape Victims

The third objective of this study was to assess whether ambivalence about wanting sex was related to rape victims' status as acknowledged or unacknowledged rape victims. Among women in the rape group, those who checked the label *rape* as applying to their experience were considered acknowledged rape victims; those who did not were considered unacknowledged rape victims. On the basis of this criterion, 35 (45.5%) were acknowledged victims, and 42 (54.5%) were unacknowledged victims. There were no significant group differences in whether nonconsensual sex had been obtained through force or intoxication or in the nature of the participants' prior relationship with the perpetrator (i.e., whether he was an acquaintance, friend, boyfriend, etc.).

Global Ratings of Wantedness

A MANOVA was conducted with rape acknowledgment as the independent variable and the global ratings of wantedness as dependent variables. There were significant differences between the acknowledged and the unacknowledged groups on the dependent variables, Wilks's Λ = .87, $F(3,70) = 3.61$, $p = .017$. On the basis of follow-up ANOVAs with the Bonferroni method, acknowledged rape victims reported wanting the sexual intercourse itself less than unacknowledged rape victims (see Table 4). Rape acknowledgment was not significantly related to wantedness of the consequences, $F(1, 72) = 2.13$, $p = .15$, Partial $\eta^2 = .03$, or overall wantedness, $F(1, 72) = 2.25$, $p = .14$, Partial $\eta^2 = .03$.

Reasons for Wanting and Not Wanting Sexual Intercourse

Two MANOVAs were conducted with rape acknowledgment as the independent variable and the Wanting Questionnaire subscale scores as dependent variables. For the analysis with the Reasons for Wanting Sex subscales as the dependent variables, there were significant differences between the acknowledged and unacknowledged groups, Wilks's Λ = .77, $F(8,60) = 2.22$, $p = .038$. Of the follow-up analyses, one reached statistical significance (see Table 4). Compared with acknowledged rape victims, unacknowledged rape victims reported wanting sex more because they were in the mood.

The MANOVA with the Reasons for Not Wanting Sex subscales as the dependent variables was not statistically significant, Wilks's Λ = .83, $F(6,62) = 2.09$, $p = .067$.

Table 4. *Global Ratings of Wantedness, Reasons for Wanting and Not Wanting Sex, and Consent Ratings as a Function of Rape Acknowledgement*

	Acknowledged Rape Group			Unacknowledged Rape Group					
Dependent variable	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*F*	*p*	Partial η^2
Global Ratings[a]									
Sexual intercourse itself	–2.48	1.37	–3 to 2	–1.27	1.74	–3 to –3	10.69	.002	.13
Reasons-for-Wanting-Sex Subscales[b]									
In the Mood	0.12	0.38	0.0 to 2.1	0.42	0.48	0.0 to 1.9	7.96	.006	.11
Consent Ratings[c]									
Their feelings of consent	1.14	0.55	1 to 4	2.71	1.49	1 to 7	34.62	<.001	.32
Their expression of consent	1.17	0.51	1 to 3	2.46	1.72	1 to 7	18.34	<.001	.20

Note. This table shows results for significant analyses of variance (ANOVAs) only.
[a]Scores can range from –3 (*strongly unwanted*) to 3 (*strongly wanted*). For follow-up ANOVAs, *df* = 1, 72; alpha was set to .017. [b]Reasons-for-Wanting-Sex subscale scores can range from 0 to 3, on a scale from 0 (*not a reason for wanting or not wanting to have sex*) to 3 (*a strong reason for wanting to have sex*). For follow-up ANOVAs, *df* = 1, 67; alpha was set to .006. [c]Scores can range from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). For follow-up ANOVAs, *df* = 1, 74; alpha was set to .017.

Secondary Analyses: Consent

Consent Ratings of the Rape and Consensual Sex Groups

Participants had rated on a 7-point scale the extent to which they had felt like they were consenting, had expressed their consent, and had expressed their nonconsent. A MANOVA was conducted with group membership (rape vs. consensual sex group) as the independent variable and the consent ratings as the dependent variables. This analysis was significant, Wilks's $\Lambda = .14$, $F(3,157) = 327.70$, $p < .001$. Follow-up ANOVAs using the Bonferroni method revealed that compared with the rape group, the consensual sex group had higher consent ratings and lower nonconsent ratings (see Table 2). Group differences were less clear-cut than might be expected, however. For example, for the item, "I felt that I consented or agreed to this experience," the modal response was 1 (*not at all true*) for the rape group (given by 54% of the group) and 7 (*very much true*) for the consensual-sex group (given by 88% of this group). However, responses of the rape group ranged from 1 to 7, and responses of the consensual sex group ranged from 4 to 7. Many participants rated their consent by using the middle of the scale, suggesting that they viewed consent as a continuous concept.

Consent as Related to Rape Acknowledgment

To explore the relationship between rape acknowledgment and self-perceived consent, a one-way MANOVA was conducted with rape acknowledgment as the independent variable and the consent ratings as dependent variables. This analysis was significant, Wilks's $\Lambda = .34$, $F(3, 72) = 12.42$, $p < .001$. Follow-up ANOVAs with the Bonferroni procedure were conducted on each of the dependent variables. Two of these ANOVAs were significant (see Table 4). Compared with unacknowledged rape victims, acknowledged rape victims reported that the intercourse had felt less consensual and that they had expressed less consent to the other person.

Discussion

Support for the New Model of Sexual Wanting

Wanting as a Continuous and Multidimensional Concept

Findings from the current study, in combination with findings from previous studies (e.g., Muehlenhard et al., 2002), provide support for conceptualizing sexual wanting as continuous and multidimensional. The continuous nature of wanting was demonstrated by the fact that for global ratings of wantedness, participants used the entire scale, not just the endpoints. The factor analysis of the Wanting Questionnaire produced multiple interpretable factors, supporting the multidimensional nature of sexual wanting.

Additionally, in response to open-ended questions, many participants described reasons for both wanting and not wanting sex. For example, a participant in the rape group described her reasons for wanting the intercourse ("I was sexually aroused from the previous making out/petting, I was highly attracted to my boyfriend, and I was under the influence") and for not wanting it ("We hadn't been dating long, I was really tired, I didn't feel good, I wasn't ready physically or emotionally"; Participant #R-067, questionnaire response).

Wanting the Act as Distinct from Wanting the Consequences

Results also supported distinguishing between wanting a sexual act and wanting its consequences. On average, women in the consensual sex group reported strongly wanting the intercourse itself but not wanting the consequences. In their qualitative responses, both the rape and consensual sex groups often described reasons for wanting the intercourse but not wanting its consequences. A woman in the rape group wrote that she wanted the sexual act ("I was horny or just didn't know where to place all my hormonal energy") but did not want the consequences ("I didn't want to put my family to shame. I didn't want to reuine [sic] my relationship with God"; Participant #R-019, questionnaire response). A woman in the consensual sex group described her reasons for wanting the sexual act ("I liked him, I was drunk, and it felt good") but not the consequences ("I wasn't ready and didn't want to get pregnant, I didn't love him"; Participant #C-027, questionnaire response).

Wanting as Distinct from Consenting

Not surprisingly, wanting sex and consenting to sex were closely related; on average, nonconsensual sex was less wanted than was consensual sex. However, the results demonstrated that individuals sometimes consent to unwanted sex and sometimes do not consent to wanted sex. When rating the wantedness of the sexual act, the consequences, and the intercourse overall, both the rape and consensual sex groups used almost the entire 7-point scale from –3 (*strongly unwanted*) to 3 (*strongly wanted*). About one fifth (19%) of the women in the rape group rated the sexual act as wanted to some degree (i.e., they rated it as 1, 2, or 3), and half of the women in the consensual sex group rated the consequences of sex as unwanted to some degree (i.e., as –1, –2, or –3). Even on the measure of overall wantedness, 5% of the rape group rated the intercourse as wanted, and 6% of the consensual sex group rated the intercourse as unwanted.

One participant in the rape group rated the intercourse as *strongly wanted* overall. She described an experience with an abusive boyfriend who often intentionally got her drunk to the point of almost passing out. He would then have sex with her despite her protests. Although clearly nonconsensual, the sex was not entirely unwanted. She wrote about her reasons for wanting to have sex, saying, "I loved him and wanted him to be happy …. I was horny too until he got controlling and his whole personality changed" (Participant #R-140, ques-

tionnaire response). Although she did not consent, she wrote that she "innerly wanted sex." The fact that the intercourse was wanted overall did not mean that the rape was not upsetting, however; she described it as an "emotionally painful" experience.

Conversely, 1 participant in the consensual-sex group described the intercourse as consensual and enjoyable, but she nevertheless rated it as *strongly unwanted* overall. She wrote,

> My sexual experiences are very few. I lost my virginity a little while ago. The last time I had sex I was still exploring…. I enjoy it, but I do get spasms of guilt feelings for doing it before marriage. (Participant #C-082, questionnaire response)

The distinction between wanting and consenting was also apparent on the subscales. On two Reasons for Wanting Sex subscales, the rape group scored higher than the consensual sex group. Although the women in the rape group did not consent, many of them reported reasons for wanting to have sex, such as fear of hurting the other person's feelings or angering the other person by refusing or fear of being physically harmed if they refused. On one hand, when women report wanting sex because of a fear of retaliation if they refuse sex (e.g., fear that the other person would physically harm them, fear that the other person would accuse them of being a "tease," etc.), it seems problematic to think of these fears as a reason for wanting sex in the same way that being aroused or wanting to strengthen the relationship is a reason for wanting sex. On the other hand, some women in this study did rate these as reasons that they wanted to have sex. This again highlights the importance of distinguishing between wanting and consenting; clearly "wanting" sex to avoid harm is different than freely consenting to sex.

Applications of the New Model

This new model and questionnaire could be used to study any topic for which levels of sexual wanting might be important. For example, the new model could be useful in research on ways in which sex is wanted and unwanted in happy versus unhappy relationships and in research on whether feelings about wanting or not wanting sex relate to sexual dysfunction. As we discuss in the next section, this model also has applications for unacknowledged rape.

Wantedness as a Predictor of Rape Acknowledgment

Although legal definitions of rape vary from state to state, generally such definitions are based on use of force or lack of consent (Estrich, 1987; Posner & Silbaugh, 1996) not on whether the sexual act is wanted or unwanted. Nevertheless, the current study provides evidence that many women used levels of wanting in their decision about whether their experience qualified as rape. Compared with acknowledged rape victims, unacknowledged rape victims rated the sexual act itself as more wanted and reported wanting the intercourse more because they were in the mood (e.g., because they were aroused, expected sex to be pleasurable, or were attracted to the other person).

The qualitative data provided further support for this idea. In response to open-ended questions, several unacknowledged rape victims mentioned wanting the sexual act. One described wanting sex because of "curiousity [sic] b/c I was a virgin" (Participant #R-183, questionnaire response). Another, who was drunk to the point of unconsciousness during the intercourse, wrote, "…when I get drunk I am usually horney [sic] so I probably wanted it as bad as him" (Participant #R-015, questionnaire response).

Implications of the Relationship Between Wantedness and Rape Acknowledgment

The distinction between wanting sex and consenting to sex could have important implications for rape victims, clinicians, victim advocates, and juries. When rape is conceptualized as unwanted sex, any evidence that the victim wanted to have sex (e.g., flirtatious behavior prior to the rape, sexual arousal during the rape) can be interpreted to mean that the incident was not really rape. As a result, rape victims may experience blame or guilt for having "asked for it," even though they did not consent to it.

A woman who does not consider her experience rape is unlikely to report it to the police or to seek support in dealing with her distress. There is some evidence that unacknowledged victims may have more difficulty recovering from their rape than do acknowledged victims. For example, research suggests that, compared with acknowledged rape victims, unacknowledged victims tend to experience more emotional problems that interfere with their work, feel less happy, feel less supported, and consume more alcohol following their rape (Botta & Pingree, 1997). If acknowledging rape facilitates adjustment, rape victims may benefit from educational or therapeutic interventions that emphasize the distinction between wanting sex and consenting to sex and that emphasize nonconsent rather than a lack of wantedness as the defining feature of rape.

Other Findings and Directions for Future Research

Although not the primary purpose of the current study, participants' qualitative responses and the results of the secondary quantitative analyses offered insights into the definitional ambiguity of rape, the complexity of consent, and possible consequences of acknowledging versus not acknowledging rape for individual women.

Definitional Ambiguity of Rape

Research on rape often involves providing participants with an operational definition of rape; those who report an experience that meets this operational definition are considered rape victims. This approach is based on the assumption that participants and researchers are interpreting the questions the same way. In the current study, we coded partici-

pants' narrative descriptions of their experiences, and we found evidence of both false positive and false negative reports of rape on the basis of our research definition. This finding highlights the difficulties in deciding which incidents should count as rape.

Coding participants' narratives as rape or as not rape was often difficult, especially for incidents that did not involve force and thus would qualify as rape only under the intoxication criterion. The legal definition of rape in Kansas, which guided our research definition, includes cases of intercourse in which "the victim is incapable of giving consent … because of the effect of any alcoholic liquor, narcotic, drug or other substance, which condition was known by the offender or was reasonably apparent to the offender" (*Kansas State Annals*, 1995, 21-3502). It is unclear how intoxicated a woman must be in order to be "incapable of giving consent" and in order for the condition to be "reasonably apparent to the offender."

It seemed clear that an experience would meet the legal definition of rape if the woman was unconscious or barely coherent, or if the intercourse occurred despite her expression of nonconsent. However, not all experiences in which the woman was intoxicated seemed coercive or nonconsensual. For example, we excluded one woman from our rape group although she reported having been drunk and high on marijuana. She wrote, "The guy was hot and drunk sex is the best" (Participant #R-063, questionnaire response), and she described enthusiastically participating in the intercourse.

Particularly confusing were cases in which the woman reported "blacking out"—that is, being unable to recall portions of the situation due to intoxication. In these cases, participants recalled only fragments, if any, of the sexual encounter. If the woman was intoxicated enough to forget the intercourse, then it might seem reasonable to assume that she was too intoxicated to give consent. However, when a person blacks out, she or he may be able to talk, walk, and even drive (Education, Training, and Research Associates, 1997), so, presumably, a woman could express consent to sex without remembering it. Other people—including the "perpetrator"—might not have realized how intoxicated the woman was. One participant who reported having blacked out described her own confusion, writing, "I could have consented. I don't remember what happened so I could have been the one to initiate. But I'll never know for sure" (Participant #R-194, questionnaire response). We debated whether to include this woman in the rape group and eventually decided not to include her.

Cases in which the woman gave in to intercourse as a result of fear were also sometimes difficult to classify. The legal definition of rape in Kansas includes intercourse in which "the victim is overcome by force or fear" (*Kansas State Annals*, 1995, 21-3502). It is unclear what type of fear should count. We decided to count fear of physical harm but not fear of social repercussions or relationship conflict. For example, 1 participant, whom we ultimately excluded from the rape group, wrote, " …the only reason I didn't stop him was b/c I was afraid. I guess I let it happen because I knew that I had to continue to have contact with him and I didn't want him to spread rumors" (Participant #R-149, questionnaire response). We decided that fear of rumors was insufficient to qualify the experience as rape. We regarded this situation as coercive but not as rape. Future research could explore further how participants interpret operational definitions of rape. It also could explore further sexual experiences falling somewhere between consensual sex and rape, especially situations involving alcohol.

The Ambiguity of Consent

On average, acknowledged rape victims in the current study rated the sexual act as less consensual than unacknowledged rape victims. However, it was evident that consent and nonconsent, like wanting and not wanting, are not clear-cut or easily defined. Many participants in the current study seemed to view consent as continuous rather than dichotomous. Ratings in the middle of the 7-point scale imply that the participants did not regard the experience as clearly consensual or nonconsensual.

In addition, many participants expressed idiosyncratic ideas about what constitutes having consented. Some regarded passivity as consent ("I guess you could say I 'consented' by not saying yes and just letting it happen"; Participant #R-166, questionnaire response). This response was consistent with past findings that the modal way that college women and men reported expressing their consent for sexual intercourse was to do nothing (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999).

Some participants regarded being in a particular situation as having consented. One unacknowledged rape victim rated her sexual experience as somewhat consensual, despite having said "no" and pushed the other person away. In an interview, she explained that she believed that she demonstrated consent by putting herself in a sexually risky situation:

> Well, the fact that I was there and wasn't telling my friend to take me home or telling one of the guys there that was sober to take me home, you know… . Kind of by not making a big deal out of, like being alone in there with him… . You know, by staying and by not saying anything about the awkward situation of being alone in there with a guy that I just met like twice before, that was kind of like consenting to it (Participant #R-150, interview response).

Future research could focus on how individuals conceptualize consent and nonconsent and how that conceptualization affects rape acknowledgment.

Effects of Acknowledging or Not Acknowledging Rape on Individual Women

As mentioned, there is evidence that acknowledging rape is beneficial for psychological recovery from rape (Botta & Pingree, 1997). Consistent with this point, in the current study, when asked how she would feel differently if she thought her experience was a rape, an unacknowledged rape

victim stated, “I wouldn’t blame myself as much if it was rape because I had control and I let it happen so I do get angry with myself for letting it happen” (Participant #R-142, interview response).

Although labeling an act as rape may decrease self-blame and aid in recovery for some women, it may have negative consequences for others. Lamb (1999) suggested that many women do not want to think of themselves as “victims” because the term “revives the original feeling of helplessness and vulnerability” (pp. 125–126). Because our culture emphasizes individual responsibility, she wrote that it is reasonable that individuals would want to emphasize their own “resiliency, agency, and strength” (p. 126) by rejecting the victim label. Along these lines, one rape victim in the current study checked the label *rape* as applying to her experience but expressed reservations about using the label:

> I never say rape—I’m not really sure why. I tell people my 1st experience was not by my choice, it was forced…. I think that it makes me less upset to say. It seems less abrasive. Also, I think I worry a lot about how other people will think of me or react if I say rape (Participant #R-197, questionnaire response).

Several unacknowledged rape victims suggested that they had considered calling their experience rape and had rejected that label for a variety of reasons. For example, one woman described the problems that labeling her experience as *rape* could have caused:

> It’s really weird because… I went back to my house the next morning, and one of the first things I felt was, “I really want to take a shower,” but then I thought, “Ohh, but you’re not supposed to do that … in case you feel it matters or anything,” and then I was like, “No, that would just be weird.” I don’t think I could do that to my parents and to him and to everybody else and to come out and say I was raped.… I mean, among other things, it would just be word against word. I just didn’t see any pretty way of handling it, really, I mean for anybody, because my parents don’t know I drink, so that would be bad. I’m definitely not proud of my conduct. … I’ve heard that through trials everything comes out, and you know, they look for every reason they can to make it look like you said yes or whatever. It’s almost easier to think of it as an accident (Participant #R-115, interview response).

She also suggested that she avoided labeling her experience as rape because it would have made her feel uncomfortable to think of the other person as a rapist.

> *Participant:* I guess the weird thing about considering it rape would be I would have to consider him the person who did it and that’s really weird.
> *Researcher:* Is it hard to think of him as a rapist?
> *Participant*: Yeah.
> *Researcher*: Why is that hard?
> *Participant*: He’s a normal horny college guy, a next-door neighbor, funny, um, well, not that intelligent [laughs]. Um, he just seems like a lot of guys I’ve met. Maybe not someone I’d want to date, but someone I’d want to hang out with. And if he can do that, if he’s a rapist, or even a potential, then that makes me start going, “What about that guy, and what about that guy, and what about that guy?” (Participant #R-115, interview response).

Another unacknowledged rape victim conveyed similar themes:

> I think I would be a lot more upset about it [if it had been rape]. I think it would have affected me for longer than it did. Because the next morning I was like, “I can’t believe that happened,” but I wasn’t like, “Oh my gosh, I got raped, and now I need to do something about it.” I was like, “Wow that was a big mistake and that won’t happen again” (Participant #R-138, interview response).

Labeling her experience “a big mistake” allowed her to feel less traumatized and more in control. For her, avoiding the term “rape” may have been empowering.

Thus, this study suggested two sets of reasons for why women might not label their nonconsensual sexual intercourse as rape. One set of reasons relates to how they conceptualize sexual wanting: If they regard wanting sex as consenting to sex, and if they had reasons for wanting sex, then they might conclude that their experience does not qualify as rape or that they are not entitled to call their experience *rape*. The other set of reasons relates to the perceived consequences applying the term *rape* to their own experience: Labeling an incident as rape might make them feel obligated to act, such as by reporting the incident to the police. It might lead to negative interpersonal or practical consequences. It might increase their feeling of vulnerability. It might make the experience more traumatizing. In some cases, then, rejecting the label *rape* might be a constructive and empowering choice. Future research could further explore the advantages and disadvantages of acknowledging or not acknowledging rape as well as the meanings and expectations that individuals assign to the label *rape*.

A Final Point

At first glance, it might seem inappropriate or harmful to claim that some rape victims actually wanted to have sex. After all, “She wanted it” is a rape myth used to blame rape victims or to dismiss claims of rape (Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). We argue that, to the contrary, this concept can actually be helpful to rape victims.

Most people would probably agree that it is possible to want to have sex but to decide not to consent. If the other person proceeds despite the lack of consent, it is rape, regardless of how strongly the sex was wanted. Contemporary thinking about rape has expanded to include circumstances that, in the past, would have disqualified the incidents from counting as rape. Currently, many people are willing to say that if the victim did

not consent, it is rape, even if the victim flirted with the perpetrator, even if the victim had been drinking, or even if the victim experienced sexual arousal or orgasm during the incident. It seems constructive to expand current thinking about rape to say that if the victim did not consent, it is rape, even if the victim wanted to have sex. Rape is about the absence of consent, not the absence of desire—an idea that could be liberating to many rape victims.

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Appendix A
Wanting Questionnaire: Instructions for Administration and Scoring

Administration Instructions

Participants were instructed to think about how they felt immediately before their sexual experience. For each item, participants were first asked to indicate whether the statement was true for them shortly before the sexual intercourse started. For items that were true, participants were asked to rate the degree to which the statement described a reason for wanting or not wanting sex in that situation, using the following scale:

–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3
A strong reason for NOT wanting to have sex	A moderate reason for NOT wanting to have sex	A weak reason for NOT wanting to have sex	Not a reason for wanting or not wanting to have sex	A weak reason for WANTING to have sex	A moderate reason for WANTING to have sex	A strong reason for WANTING to have sex

Scoring Instructions

We set the "not true" items equal to 0. When calculating the Reasons for Wanting Sex subscale scores, negative ratings were replaced with zeros, and when calculating the Reasons for Not Wanting Sex subscale scores, positive ratings were replaced with zeros. We then calculated each participant's mean score on the following sets of items to obtain subscale scores:

Reasons for Wanting Sex subscales

In the Mood: 1a, 2a, 3a, 6a, 7a, 10, 11a, 12a, 13a, 14, 16a, 17, 19, 22a, 26, 78

Negative Consequences of Refusing: 49, 62, 66, 67, 68, 71, 75, 80, 82

Personal Gain: 47, 48, 54, 79a

Social Benefits: 40a, 41a, 45

Fear of Physical Harm: 69, 74

Strengthen the Relationship: 50, 51, 59, 61

Not Intoxicated: 20a, 21a

Not a Virgin: 29b, 30b

Reasons for Not Wanting Sex subscales

Not in the Mood: 1b, 2b, 3c, 5a, 12b, 13b, 16b

Negative Consequences: 23, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39

Lack of Confidence: 4b, 18, 25, 28, 29a

Cheating: 63, 64

Disliked the Other Person: 6b, 7b

Negative Social Consequences: 40b, 41b

Appendix B
Wanting Questionnaire Items

Items Assessing Reasons for Wanting and Not Wanting Sex

1a. I was sexually aroused before the sexual intercourse began.
1b. I was not sexually aroused before the sexual intercourse began.
2a. I expected to be aroused during the sexual intercourse.
2b. I did not expect to be aroused during the sexual intercourse.
3a. I felt interested in and excited about the possibility of the sexual act.
3b. I felt indifferent about the possibility of the sexual act; I didn't care one way or another.
3c. I felt uninterested in and bored about possibility of the sexual act.
4a. I felt comfortable about my body.
4b. I felt uncomfortable about my body.
5. I felt disgusted or revolted by the possibility of the sexual intercourse.
6a. I found the other person physically attractive.
6b. I found the other person physically unattractive.
7a. I liked the other person.
7b. I disliked the other person.
8. I didn't know the other person well.
9a. The sexual activity in question was socially acceptable.
9b. The sexual activity in question was socially unacceptable.
10. I felt curious to try sexual intercourse with this person in this situation.
11a. There was a good location available (it was comfortable, there was privacy, etc.).
11b. There was a problem with the location (it was uncomfortable, there was little privacy, etc.)
12a. I was in the mood to engage in sexual intercourse.
12b. I was not in the mood to engage in sexual intercourse.
13a. I found the other person's behavior appealing or attractive in this situation.
13b. The other person's behavior was unappealing or obnoxious in this situation.
14. It seemed that the other person wanted to engage in the sexual intercourse at least to some degree.
15. It seemed that the other person was at least somewhat reluctant to engage in the sexual intercourse.
16a. I expected emotional closeness during this sexual activity.
16b I did not expect emotional closeness during this sexual activity.
17. There would have been a great deal of physical closeness during this sexual activity.
18. I expected the sexual intercourse to be painful or physically uncomfortable.

19. I expected the sexual intercourse to be pleasurable.
20a. I was not intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).
20b. I was mildly intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).
20c. I was extremely intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).
21a. The other person was not intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).
21b. The other person was mildly intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).
21c. The other person was extremely intoxicated (on alcohol or drugs).
22a. The other person consented (or agreed) to engage in the sexual intercourse.
22b. The other person did not consent (or agree) to engage in the sexual intercourse.
23. I felt that engaging in the sexual intercourse would make me feel uncomfortable because it would be going against my morals and values.
24. I or the other person was menstruating.
25. I was nervous about my ability to perform sexual intercourse.
26. I was confident about my ability to perform sexual intercourse.
27. I felt physically unwell or sick.
28. It would have been my first time engaging in the sexual activity in question.
29a. I was a virgin.
29b. I was not a virgin.
30a. The other person was a virgin.
30b. The other person was not a virgin.
31. I thought that, if I had sex, I might get a sexually transmitted disease.
32. I thought I might give the other person a sexually transmitted disease.
33. I thought I might get pregnant or get the other person pregnant.
34. I thought I might get into trouble (e.g., with my parents, my boss, the police).
35. I thought I might feel bad or guilty because it was against my morals or values.
36. I thought I might feel bad or guilty because it was against my parents' morals or values.
37. I thought my parents might find out.
38. I thought that having sex would improve my self-esteem or self-image at least in some ways.
39. I thought that having sex would harm my self-esteem or self-image at least in some ways.
40a. I thought it would improve my reputation among my female friends and acquaintances.
40b. I thought it would harm my reputation among my female friends and acquaintances.
41a. I thought it would improve my reputation among my male friends and acquaintances.
41b. I thought it would harm my reputation among my male friends and acquaintances.
42. I thought it would prevent me from doing something else I needed to do (e.g., studying, going to work).
43. I thought it would prevent me from doing something else fun or pleasant (e.g., watching TV, going to a movie).
44a. I thought it would make the other person happy.
44b. I thought it would make the other person unhappy.
45. I thought it would give me something to talk about with friends and acquaintances.
46. I thought that, if I had sex, the other person might think I was cheap or easy.
47. I thought it might result in my getting something I really needed (e.g., food, money, transportation, shelter).
48. I thought it might result in my getting something I really wanted (e.g., a gift, a vacation).
49. I felt like it would fulfill my obligation to the other person.
50. I thought that it would demonstrate my love for the other person.
51. I thought that it would make me feel closer to the other person.
52. I thought that it would make the other person fall in love with me.
53. I thought that it would make me feel needed or wanted.
54. I thought that it would result in the other person doing something I wanted.
55. I felt like it would be fair to the other person because, in the past, he/she had engaged in sexual intercourse with me when I wanted to.
56. I thought that it would result in my being accused of rape or sexual coercion
57. I thought that I might regret it later.
58. I thought that the other person might regret it later.
59. I thought that having sex would strengthen my relationship with the other person in some ways.
60. I thought that having sex would damage my relationship with the other person in some ways.
61. I thought that it might lead to a steady relationship with the other person.
62. I thought that it would cause the other person to stop pressuring me.
63. It would have been "cheating," and I was afraid that it would damage my relationship with my spouse or steady dating partner.
64. It would have been "cheating," and I was afraid that it would hurt my spouse or steady dating partner.
65a. I wanted to be more sexually experienced.
65b. I did not want to be more sexually experienced.
66. I wanted to avoid hurting the other person's feelings.
67. Refusing sex would have made me feel guilty.
68. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person would become angry.
69. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might harm me physically.
70. There was nothing else to do.
71. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might accuse me of being a tease or leading him/her on.

72. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might think I was ungrateful because he/she had done something for me.
73. I was afraid that refusing would make me seem selfish.
74. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might try to force me to do it.
75. I was afraid that the other person would be disappointed if we didn't have sex.
76. I thought that this was my only chance to have sex with this person—that it was now or never.
77. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might carry out some threat against me.
78. This was an experience that I didn't want to miss out on.

79a. I felt like having sex would have made me feel powerful.

79b. I felt like having sex would have made me feel powerless.

80. I thought that refusing might damage my relationship with the other person at least in some ways.
81. I thought that refusing might strengthen my relationship with the other person at least in some ways.
82. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might break up with me.
83. I was afraid that, if I refused, the other person might have sex with someone else.
84. It was a situation where sex was expected (e.g., it was prom night; the other person was my girlfriend/boyfriend visiting from out of town,etc.).

Global Wantedness Items

Overall, how much did you want or not want to engage in the SEXUAL INTERCOURSE ITSELF (not considering the consequences)?

–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3
Strongly unwanted	Moderately unwanted	Slightly unwanted	No opinion	Slightly wanted	Moderately wanted	Strongly wanted

Overall, how much did you want or not want the POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF ENGAGING in the sexual intercourse?

–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3
Strongly unwanted	Moderately unwanted	Slightly unwanted	No opinion	Slightly wanted	Moderately wanted	Strongly wanted

Overall, how much did you want or not want to engage in sexual intercourse in this situation (taking into account the intercourse itself, the possible consequences of engaging in the intercourse, and the possible consequences of not engaging in the intercourse)?

–3	–2	–1	0	1	2	3
Strongly unwanted	Moderately unwanted	Slightly unwanted	No opinion	Slightly wanted	Moderately wanted	Strongly wanted